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ABSTRACT

Grunig's decision-situation model is proposed as a comprehensive framework under which various public-relations-related theories may be subsumed. The decision-situation model postulates three dimensions which, taken together, may predict the course of communication behavior: level of involvement, problem recognition, and structural constraints. Grunig and others draw upon a coorientation model to evaluate traditional public relations practices. As with the decision-situation model, many of the more empirical studies of external communication can be incorporated into the coorientation constructs. Ideally, the decision-situation model and coorientation model should work together: the former to prescribe the scope and direction of a public relations campaign and the latter to evaluate its success. In conclusion, the decision-situation model was found to serve two functions: by identifying those segments of the population most likely to benefit from promotional activities, it can improve the efficiency of public relations campaigns and, by providing a general paradigm for future research in external communications, it represents a first step toward professionalization of the public relations industry. (Author/AA)

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A GENERAL PARADIGM

FOR PUBLIC RELATIONS RESEARCH

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INTRODUCTION

Research in the field of public relations can be said to represent the pre-paradigm stage of scientific knowledge (Kuhn, 1970). At this stage, an assortment of hypotheses and models are proposed that attempt to explain the phenomena in question. These models may arise from several academic disciplines, or they may be limited to very narrow aspects of the problem. There is, however, no structured 'point of view' or 'manner of looking at things' that is powerful enough to explain all aspects of the problem and to isolate the researchers as members of a distinct academic discipline.

Once such a theory or paradigm is developed, it provides a starting point from which to generate research designed to support or disconfirm its postulates.

External organizational communication research has traditionally centered around one of three broad areas: between an organization and its clients, between the organization and the community in which it operates, and between the various organizations that interact within a common environment. Researchers from several academic disciplines, most notably sociologists and management theorists, have proposed myriad theories concerning each of those areas of external organizational communication.

There are social psychological descriptions of organizational, client, and environmental characteristics and their influence upon each other. There are classifications of organizational "types" based on profit or nonprofit orientation, functions, orientation toward the

client, or degree of environmental interaction. There are flow charts and diagrams that delineate the interactions that may take place between the organization and its environment.

Much of the research reported in this paper was done by sociologists, in efforts to explain various forms of organizational relationships and communication. External organizational communication, i.e., between the organization and the relevant aspects of its environment, is essentially the province of the public relations practitioner. An integrated body of knowledge concerning external organizational communication would be of great benefit to the practitioner in his work.

This paper proposes Grunig's (1975) decision-situation theory of communication as a common thread integrating the many approaches that have been taken in the study of public relations. Grunig's adaptation of McLeod and Chaffee's model of coorientation (1973) will be invoked to empirically evaluate these approaches. Finally, in a specific example of public relations practice, the coorientation model will be used to evaluate the function of a "middleman" or third party in external organizational communication.

The decision-situation model is a theory that Grunig (1975: 103-112) has developed to predict communication activity between systems, whether individuals or organizations. Grunig hypothesizes two dimensions to his decision-situation model: individual and structural. The individual aspect is the degree of problem recognition; the structural aspect refers to the existence of constraints that limit the system's alternatives (Grunig, 1975: 105). The interaction of these dimensions produces the following configuration:

CONSTRAINTS	PROBLEM RECOGNITION: Yes	PROBLEM RECOGNITION: No
No	Problem solving	Routine habit
Yes	Constrained behavior	Fatalistic behavior

The labels inside the boxes refer to the type of system characterized by that particular interaction between the dimensions:

(1) The problem-solving system recognizes the problem and has no constraints. Therefore, this type of system should seek information to facilitate the choice between the various alternatives open to it. Such a system would be most likely to engage in diachronic (information-seeking) communication.

For example, Melcher and Adamek (1973) conclude from their study of 300 health and welfare agencies that "those organizations with the greatest abundance of elements are most likely to engage in cooperative exchange relationships" (1973: 213). Their lack of constraints, along with their similarity of function (problem recognition), encourages them

to work together to achieve a common goal. Such cooperative arrangements would seem to be highly diachronic in nature.

(2) The routine habit system also has no constraints; however, it does not recognize that a problem exists. For example, Janowitz, Wright and Delany (1962), in their study of government agencies in a metropolitan community, found that "to some degree, the essential services of government are accepted simply because there is no alternative or because the public sees no possibility of alternatives" (1962: 278).

Any diachronic communication engaged in by a routine habit system is geared toward reinforcing its habitual behavior.

(3) A system with constrained behavior recognizes the problem but also faces constraints. It will only engage in diachronic communication up to the point where the system becomes aware of its constraints.

(4) A fatalistic system does not recognize a problem and also faces constraints. Such a system is an extreme form of environmental control (Grunig, 1975: 108-110).

Grunig applies this model to external communication in his study of Giant Food's consumer information program in a graduate seminar in corporate communication (1975: 119-123). He used a Q-factor analysis to identify which sectors of the public were most likely to benefit from increased communication. Grunig was able to isolate the "middle-class" respondents as the most "problem-solving" public, since they recognized a problem (saving money) and faced the fewest constraints in terms of time and transportation. The "lower class" public fell in the routine habit category, while "professionals" fell somewhere between fatalistic and constrained behavior.

Another example of Grunig's empirical application of decision-situation theory is his study of public relations functions in various organizations (1975: 125-131). The organizations in this study factored into problem-solving and fatalistic types and, as expected, public relations departments in problem-solving organizations were more likely to participate in diachronic communication than were fatalistic organizations.

Grunig has since added a third dimension to his decision-situation model: degree of involvement (class lecture, September 11, 1975). He suggests that the above configuration of system "types" is most applicable where the system is highly involved in the situation. A system is more likely to engage in communication activity when there is a high degree of involvement.

Grunig has utilized his decision-situation model to predict the likelihood of communication between any two systems, whether between two individuals, two organizations, or an organization and its public. He hypothesizes that "groups or individuals would be expected to communicate most with one another when they feel that a problem exists, perceive it in roughly the same way, and recognize approximately the same alternatives as feasible" (1972: 8-9).

There have been many studies pointing to the value of similar problem perception in facilitating communicative behavior. One of the more popular concepts concerning interorganizational communication involves the amount of domain consensus that exists among the various organizations in a community. Domain consensus is a major determinant of Levine and White's (1961) exchange theory of interorganizational communication, and refers to the extent to which several organizations' goals and functions overlap or

complement each other. In terms of decision-situation theory, domain consensus corresponds to problems that are similar or shared among the various systems.

Levine and White (1961: 599) hypothesize that "domain consensus is a prerequisite to exchange," and that similarity or complementarity of organizational functions can predict the amount of interaction between organizations.

Melcher and Adamek (1973: 212) note that exchange theory is limited to cooperative activities and amend it: "a lack of domain consensus may lead to competition or conflict." Similarly, Aiken and Hage (1968: 916) suggest that "the probability of conflict is reduced and cooperation facilitated" in arrangements between organizations with complementary resources. And Warren et al. (1973: 152), in their study of community decision organizations, found that "the closer the interest field of two or more organizations, the more frequent would be their interaction."

Along the same vein, Guetzkow speculates that the degree of overlapping (or identical) activities, as opposed to complementarity of functions (between highly specialized organizations) determine whether interorganizational communication will be cooperative or competitive (1966: 31):

Conjectures on Frequency of Occurrences of Relations Among Organizations

	Largely Cooperative	Mixture of Cooperation and Competition	Largely Competitive
Largely identical activities	Seldom	Seldom	Often
Highly specialized and differentiated activities	Often	Most often	Seldom

Lefton and Rosengren's (1966) theory of laterality and longitudinality is an example of how organizations with similar problem perceptions toward their clients have certain structural similarities on various levels of external communication. Laterality represents the extent of an organization's interest in the client as a person, how much of the client's life is perceived as important. Longitudinality, on the other hand, is the time span over which the organization-client relationships extends. Below is a table which describes where different types of hospitals place along these dimensions (1966: 806):

		Biographical Interest	
	Empirical Examples	Lateral	Longitudinal
1.	Acute general hospital	-	-
2.	Tuberculosis hospital, rehabilitation center	-	+
3.	Short-term psychiatric hospital	+	-
4.	Long-term therapeutic hospital, nursing home	+	+

On the level of organization-client communication, the authors predict that organizations high in laterality will require their clients to conform to the organization's rules, whereas organizations high on longitudinality emphasize their clients' commitment to the organization's ideology (1966:807):

Orientations Toward Clients		Compliance Problems	
Lateral	Longitudinal	Conformity	Commitment
-	-	No	No
+	+	Yes	Yes
-	+	No	Yes
+	-	Yes	No

(This point will be discussed further in a later section on involvement.)

The authors also suggest that modes of interorganizational collaboration are related to the organizations' problem orientation toward their clients.

They divide such collaborations into formal vs. informal, and the subject matter into administrative (financial) vs. operational (facilities). The table below illustrates the authors' predictions (1966: 808):

Orientations Toward Clients		Modes of Interorganizational Collaboration			
		Formal		Informal	
Lateral	Longitudinal	Admin.	Oper.	Admin.	Oper.
-	-	No	No	Yes	Yes
+	+	Yes	Yes	No	No
-	+	Yes	No	No	Yes
+	-	No	Yes	Yes	No

Thompson and McEwen (1958) suggest that when "outsiders" (i.e., the public or other organizations) are coopted at the point where an organization is attempting to define the problems facing it, these outsiders will have maximum control over an organization's activities. They define public relations as an organizational tool for educating the public to share its problem perceptions. (This is strictly synchronic communication activity, the traditional view of public relations.)

Bidwell (1970) states that the relationship between a professional and his client depends on the similarity of their perceptions of the professional mandate. In cases where the clients are unable to properly evaluate the professionals' problem orientation (as in hospital administration), Perrow (1961) suggests that the professionals must turn to indirect indexes of quality and prestige. Examples of such indexes are publicizing the "hotel-like" atmosphere and sophisticated facilities of the hospital. Similarly, Warren's (1967) study of community decision organizations showed that an organization will reorder its value priorities in terms of the community's perception of the various problems, especially when the organization's financial survival depends on allocation of public funds.

And in yet another application of Grunig's problem recognition dimension, Etzioni (1958) rationalizes the communication gap between a bureaucrat and his client as resulting from the bureaucrat's organization-orientation taking priority over his customer-orientation. Katz and Danet (1973) offer another explanation for this discrepancy: the bureaucrat and the clients have different perspectives and definitions of each other's role. Both of these hypotheses explain a communication gap resulting from dissimilar problem orientations.

The second dimension of Grunig's decision-situation model is the existence of constraints. Grunig predicts that systems facing similar constraints and alternatives are more likely to communicate (Grunig, 1972). Again, this theory seems to subsume the conclusions of many other researchers.

Blau's (1960) study of caseworker-client relationships in a social welfare agency illustrates the effect of bureaucratic constraints on its members. He found that

> the agency's emphasis on following procedures, and...the requirement to investigate closely each recipient's eligibility, made it impossible for (the workers) to provide the kind of case-work service which would benefit clients most. (Blau, 1960: 344).

However, as the worker gained familiarity with agency rules, Blau observes that "the more experienced worker's greater understanding of procedures and better adaptation to them made him less confined by them" (Blau, 1960: 347).

Similarly, Georgopoulos (1973) notes that members of a hospital are constrained by "sociotechnical limitations" (1973: 115) and social definitions of professional-patient roles. Blau and Scott (1962), however, suggest that a professional is less likely to feel constrained by bureaucratic

procedures because his reference group is the profession rather than the organization (1962: 74). Another approach views accountability as a social constraint imposed specifically upon professionals (White, Levine and Vlasak, 1973: 183).

Organization-client communication is often affected by constraints on the clients' alternatives. Katz and Danet (1973) cite the voluntariness of a client's interaction with a particular organization as an important situational factor in organization-client relations. Eisenstadt (1962) observes that "the greater (the organization's) dependence on its clientele in terms of their being able to go to a competing agency, the more it will have to develop techniques of communication and additional services to retain its clientele" (1962: 276).

Thompson combines this factor with organizational constraints placed on its member-representatives (e.g., salesmen, public relations personnel), in terms of the rigidity of permissible alternatives available to the organization member in dealing with clients. The relationship between these client and organizational constraints is illustrated in the following figure (Thompson, 1962: 312):

Degree of Non-Member Discretion	Specificity of Organizational Control: Member Programmed	Member Heuristic
Interaction mandatory	I (clerical)	II (commercial)
Interaction optional	III (semi-professional)	IV (professional)

Katz and Danet (1973) deal with a situation in which the client imposes constraints directly upon the organization member with whom he is negotiating.

In this case, the organization member is balancing the client's pressures to grant special favors against bureaucratic constraints to follow the rules. The authors developed this configuration of the various alternative outcomes (Katz and Danet, 1973: 669):

PRESSURE ON OFFICIAL

HIS RESPONSE	None	Pressure to Grant Favor	Pressure to Discriminate Negatively
NEUTRAL	conforms to rules-"pure" bureaucratic encounter	resists-adheres to the rules	resists-adheres to the rules
POSITIVE	dispenses favors at own initiative	acquiesces to pressures-corruption, "pull"	overcompensates-reaction in opposite direction to "prove" resistance to pressure
NEGATIVE	overconforms to rules-"bureaucratic personality"	reacts in opposite direction to "prove" resistance to pressure	acquiesces to pressure; discrimination

Levine and White's (1961) exchange theory assumes that scarcity of the necessary elements of organizational survival (i.e., clients, labor and capital) forces organizations to restrict their functions and interact with other organizations facing similar constraints. On the other hand, several authors have observed that interorganizational collaboration tends to impose more constraints on the participating organizations' activities. Indeed, Aiken and Hage (1968) found that "the greater the number of joint programs (in which an organization is involved), the more organizational decision-making is constrained through obligations, commitments, or contracts with other organizations, and the greater the degree of organizational interdependence" (1968: 913-914) (emphasis added). Thus, there appears to be a

cycle of constraints which force collaboration, which in turn imposes more constraints, which again increase organizational interdependence.

Guetzkow (1966) observes that often organizations will impose constraints upon themselves (in the form of proscribing multiple memberships or stipulating that overlapping members must be non-voting, for example) to avoid being caught in such a cycle.

An empirical example of how other organizations' constraints impinge upon a focal organization is a case study by Maniha and Perrow (1965). A local government had established a Youth Commission as a non-action study group, composed of representatives from various community organizations concerned with youth problems (e.g., school system, YMCA, police force). For the first year of its existence, the organization was virtually stymied by the various constraints imposed upon it by its component organizations. However, continued requests of the Youth Commission for its opinions and support from organizations not represented in the Youth Commission, finally served to delineate an appropriate 'domain' for the new commission above and beyond the constraints imposed by the member organizations. Thompson and McEwen (1958: 29) aptly summarize this behavior: "Goals appear to grow out of interaction, both within the organization and between the organization and its environment."

The third component of Grunig's decision-situation model is degree of involvement. Involvement may prove to be a predisposing factor in communication, i.e., systems that are not highly involved in some focal aspect of their environment are not likely to communicate, regardless of the variables of problem recognition and constraints.

Lefton and Rosengren's (1966) analysis of laterality and longitudinality (see above, pp. 7-8) is one approach to the effect of differing levels of involvement on organization-client interaction. High laterality and high longitudinality are both indicators of high involvement of the organization in its clients' progress. Parsons (1970: 3) characterizes two similar dimensions as "scope of membership" and "intensity of involvement".

Using this construct to explain the authors' predictions concerning client conformity and commitment (see chart, p. 7), high lateral organizations (those having high involvement with the client as a person) require conformity to organization rules because all facets of the client's "life-space" must be controlled. On the other hand, high longitudinal organizations (those having an extended involvement in the client's life) require the client's commitment to organizational ideals in order to maintain the client's compliance over a long period of time. Organizations that are high on both dimensions are total institutions such as nursing homes and prisons, which represent the ultimate degree of organization-client involvement.

Simpson and Gulley (1962) propose a construct similar to that of Lefton and Rosengren (1966). Their dimensions of involvement are focused-diffuse (depending on the number of goals to which the organization addresses itself) and internal-external (referring to the absence or presence of involvement with the community). The authors' illustration of the interaction of these two dimensions as they affect organizational centralization, membership involvement and internal communication, is as follows (1962: 345):

	Centralization	Membership Involvement	Internal Communication
Focused internal	High	Low	Low
Focused external	Medium	Medium	Medium
Diffused internal	Medium	Medium	Medium
Diffused external	Low	High	High

Bidwell and Vreeland (1964) classify organizations as either noninducting, in which the client deals with the organization on a functionally specific basis and where the level of involvement is therefore low, and the inducting organizations, which are of two subtypes: (1) associational, where the interaction is episodic and involvement is fairly low, and (2) communal, which represents the total institution with maximum of client involvement.

Rosengren (1964) describes the communication patterns of a mental institution, which is a total institution whose basic structure has changed from custodial to therapeutic. Rosengren observes that the introduction of the "therapeutic milieu" has involved "a general flattening of the authority system and an opening of communication channels" (1964: 73). This process, according to Rosengren, has resulted in an "ethic of maximum communication", which is the belief that a "free flowing and diffuse body of information equally dispersed" (1964: 79) among members of the organization will maximize organizational functioning. This increase in communication has also increased the level of personal involvement of organization members with their clients.

This conceptualization appears to be a reversal of Grunig's proposal that high involvement precedes communication activity; however, the mere fact of the total institution, as well as the therapeutic ideology, presuppose a fairly high level of concern (involvement) in patient progress, which may have provided the initial impetus for the "ethic of maximum communication."

Finally, Blau's (1960) study of caseworkers in a social welfare agency is a similar example of organization-client relationships in a situation that falls just short of a total institution in that the interactions are episodic, but very wide in scope and moderately long-lived. This situation illustrates Parson's (1970) notion of an "asymmetrical reciprocal relationship" because

there is much more involvement on the part of organization members than the clients. In fact, Blau (1960) observes a reaction he calls "reality shock", when social workers discover that their clients are lying and cheating in order to receive public assistance. This reality shock can be mitigated by peer group communication, which in turn increases the worker's involvement with his clients. The table below indicates the different levels of involvement for workers of different seniority and degree of peer group integration (Blau, 1960: 354):

Concern: worry about cases	Newcomer integration		1-3 years integration		Old-timer integration	
	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Often or sometimes....	44	67	22	42	25	40
Rarely.....	44	25	22	25	0	50
Never.....	11	8	56	33	75	10
No. of cases.....	9	12	9	12	8	10

Thus, in this case, high involvement with the client encourages communication with the peer group, which allows further involvement with the client without reality shock.

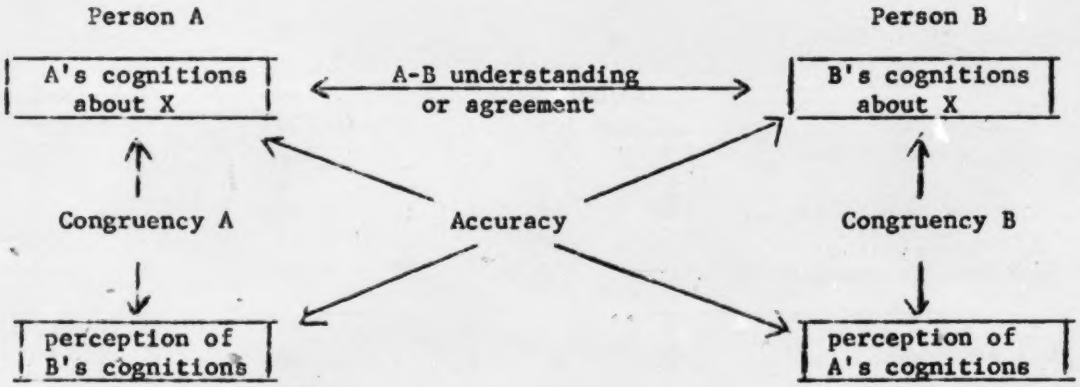
Grunig uses his adaptation of McLeod and Chaffee's (1973) model of coorientation to empirically demonstrate the existence of shared problem perceptions and constraints in several studies. Coorientation theory, as initially proposed by McLeod and Chaffee (1973), is a useful and powerful tool for measuring the effectiveness of all levels of organizational communication.

Coorientation is conceptualized as the simultaneous orientation of two or more people or groups toward some aspect of their environment. The theoretical model assumes that a person's behavior is a function of his own cognitive perception of the world, his perception of others' orientations

to the world, and the actual cognitions and perceptions of others. Communication, then, in terms of coorientation theory, is

> the complex interaction between the attitudes and expectations that (two systems) bring to contact, behavior in the encounter itself, as well as the changes or additions, if any, in the attitudes and expectations of both parties as a result of contact. (Katz and Danet, 1973: 670).

McLeod and Chaffee's (1973: 484) basic operational model is as follows:



There are four factors or dimensions involved:

(1) congruency, the degree of similarity between the person's own cognitions and his perception of the other person's cognitions.

(2) accuracy, the similarity between one person's cognitions concerning the object and the other person's perception of these cognitions.

(3) agreement, shared cognitions or opinions about the object.

(4) understanding, shared cognitions or opinions concerning the object's attributes that are relevant to making a final decision or opinion about the object.

McGrath (1966) uses a concept similar to coorientation in his description of negotiation between representatives of two reference groups. McGrath lists the various perceptions and attitudes that must be considered:

> (1) the participants' own attitudes toward the issues; (2) their perceptions of their own reference group's attitudes toward the issues; (3) their perceptions of the other participant's attitudes toward the issues; (4) their perceptions of the opposing reference group's attitudes toward the issues; (5) several derivative measures such as their perceptions of the degree of disagreement between (a) self and other, (b) self and own reference group, (c) own and other reference group, and (d) other participant and his reference group; and (6) their perceptions of own and other reference group attitudes toward one another, over and above the specific issues of the negotiation. (McGrath, 1966: 131)

Using the constructs of the coorientation model to evaluate his decision-situation theory, Grunig and Stamm (1973: 20) state that "high levels of congruency, accuracy, understanding, and agreement could be predicted to occur most often between systems with similar value orientations and similar external constraints." Grunig and other researchers have conducted several studies that lend empirical support to his hypotheses.

In his study of a community development agency, Grunig (1975: 123-124) found that differences in employee-client orientations were related more to the person's race than to the organization member's level in the hierarchy. This contradicts Janowitz and Delany's (1957) finding that "the accuracy of public employee functional knowledge (i.e., knowledge of his client's perspectives toward the agency) is inversely related to the administrative level of the public employee in his agency" (Janowitz and Delany, 1957: 150). Grunig and Stamm (1973: 6) note that this apparent discrepancy can be explained by the equal dispersion of blacks and whites along the bureaucratic hierarchy, thereby "forcing a mixture of communication inputs." Specifically, Grunig's findings were that blacks and whites were only slightly more likely to communicate with members of their own race. Blacks, however,

> were more congruent with the clientele in their cognitions of problems and perceptions of constraints, and, as the (decision-situation) model would predict, also had more communication contact with the clientele. Both blacks and whites, however, could predict accurately the problem orientation of the low-income clientele. (Grunig, 1975: 124).

Another demonstration of the utility of combining the decision-situation approach with the coorientation model is Grunig's (1975: 131-132) study of groups having some concern with low-income housing. Factor analysis revealed two types of organization: social (or liberal) and economic, which represent opposing problem orientations. As decision-situation theory would predict, organizations in the "liberal" category tended to communicate more among themselves than with the "economic" groups. This prediction, however, did not hold for economic groups. This could be partially explained by the level of involvement each type of group has with its clients (i.e., low-income families). The liberal groups are more likely to be working directly with their clientele and often act as intervenors between their clients and the other interest groups via the media (Grunig, 1972). This increased involvement is associated with more communication, which in turn should lead to increased accuracy, congruency and understanding. Coorientational analysis of the three groups supported Grunig's hypothesis, i.e., the economic groups scored much lower than the liberals on all three dimensions. However, both typologies cooriented much better with suburbanites, probably because most members of either typology share "suburbanites" as a reference group.

Many authors suggest the usefulness of intermediaries (third parties or change agents) in facilitating communication between an organization and its clients, the community, and other organizations. These studies occa-

sionally include empirical evidence to support their hypotheses. After a review of the literature concerning this particular mode of external organizational communication, a few coorientational studies will demonstrate how the value of "middlemen" can be empirically analyzed.

Litwak and Meyer (1966) list several different forms of intermediary change agents: detached experts (see Perrow's (1961) "validating groups"), opinion leaders, voluntary associations (e.g., the PTA), overlapping memberships, and mass media. They hypothesize that the principle of communication involved between the organization and its publics will determine the most appropriate form of change agent to utilize. The authors suggest four principles of communication:

(1) Initiative must be taken by the organization when the social distance between the organization and its public is great. In such a situation the authors would recommend the use of detached experts.

(2) Intensity of the communication is important when the organization is attempting to relate to resistant publics. In this case opinion leaders may be more effective.

(3) When the message involves an area of focused expertise, close contact between the organization and its clients is necessary. Voluntary associations and detached experts can provide more direct communication.

(4) When maximum coverage is desired, the mass media and overlapping memberships are the most ubiquitous change agents. See the table below for a capsule analysis of the relative effectiveness of the various change agents (Litwak and Meyer, 1966: 45):

Coordinating Mechanisms	Principles of communication			
	Initiative	Intensity	Focused Expertise	Coverage
Detached expert	highest	high	highest	lowest
Opinion leader	moderate	highest	low	moderate
Settlement house	mod. to low	high	high	moderate
Voluntary ass'ns	lowest	moderate	moderate	high
Common messenger	moderate	low	lowest	high
Mass media	mod. to low	lowest	lowest	highest
Formal authority	high	mod. to low	high to low	high to low
Delegated function	high to low	high to low	high to low	high to low

Several authors emphasize the value of overlapping membership, where the individual belonging to both of the interacting systems becomes the agent of change. On the organization-client or organization-public level, this may take the form of "cooptation" of a representative of the clientele into the organization's decision-making process. Voluntary citizen groups may also coopt organization representatives in an attempt to induce diachronic communication.

Cooptation of a client-representative by an organization is used when the organization requires the clients' cooperation; see, for example, the introduction of "patients' advocates" in hospitals (Georgopoulos, 1973). In other circumstances, a feeling of distrust between an organization and its publics may result in cooptation, as in the creation of a student position on the Board of Regents (Bidwell, 1970).

Thompson and McEwen (1958) note that cooptation of a client-representative gives "outsiders" a better chance to introduce new ideas. According to Etzioni (1958: 261), however, "cooptation is more often applied in communication from those in control to the clients than the other way around," thereby creating a semblance of diachronic communication when in fact it does not exist.

Membership of organization members in community organizations is probably a better indicator of true diachronic activity on the part of the organization. Janowitz and Delany (1957) found that organization executive who participated in various voluntary community associations have more substantive knowledge of the public's opinions in general. The results of Saunders' (1960) study of hospital-community relations showed that administrators of highly-rated hospitals were members and officers of more professional and community organizations than administrators of low-rated hospitals (Saunders, 1960: 231):

	Organizations			
	Professional		Community	
	High-rated	Low-rated	High-rated	Low-rated
Memberships per administrator	3.2	2.5	3.2	2.1
Offices per administrator	2.3	0.3	3.3	1.1
Median number of memberships per administrator	2.0	2.0	3.0	2.0
Median number of offices per administrator	1.5	0.0	3.0	1.0
Administrators holding no office:				
Number	3	10	2	5
Percent	25	91	17	45

On the interorganizational level, overlapping membership may take the form of interlocking directorates or "supraorganizations", composed of representatives of various organizations facing similar problems. Litwak and Hylton (1962) hypothesize that organizations use such "supraorganizations" as a means of interorganizational communication in which they can ensure their own autonomy while permitting a unified effort in limited areas of mutual concern. Clark (1965: 233) sees such patterns as "a way of concerting action without bureaucracy." Thompson and McEwen (1958: 28) refer to this

type of organizational 'coalition' as 'the ultimate form of environmental control by organizations,' while Guetzkow (1966) notes that such supraorganizational processes may become institutionalized, as in government regulatory agencies, trade or professional associations, or permanent task forces.

Often an organization will create a "customer relations" department in which the organization member adopts a boundary role to mediate between the organization and its clients. Such positions serve to increase organizational permeability (Guetzkow, 1966: 19), and persons occupying these positions become continual arbitrators (Blau and Scott, 1962). Katz and Danet (1973) note that the creation of an "ombudsman" role in local governments is a good indication of progress toward increased citizen control. The ombudsman is an institutionalized middleman or "change agent", "independent of both the bureaucratic hierarchy and of the political machinery of government" (Katz and Danet, 1973: 696).

Several coorientational studies have been done that illustrate the value of intermediaries. On an operational level, accuracy, and to a lesser extent agreement and understanding, are the best indicators of communication effectiveness.

In terms of accuracy, "if two persons perceive one another's appraisal of an object more similarly than before, it can usually be assumed they have communicated" (Hesse, 1975: 2). The more communication that occurs between two systems should lead to an increase in accuracy. Thus, Janowitz and Delany (1957) conclude from their study of government agencies that frequency of contacts with mass clientele increases accuracy of functional knowledge, whereas frequency of contacts with voluntary associations increases substantive knowledge.

Guetzkow (1966: 24) summarizes the effect of communication on understanding:

> other things being equal, it would seem that the greater the frequency of interaction, the greater will be the degree of institutionalization of the relations among organizations.

A similar example of how increased communication can improve understanding is Kadushin's (1962: 528) observation that "a high degree of interaction between client and professional makes it more likely that clients will both know and internalize the norms of the professional relationship."

And agreement, finally, most often indicates that persuasion has occurred (Pearce and Stamm, 1973).

McLeod and Chaffee (1973: 491) speculate that intrapersonal orientations are important to the actual initiation of communication:

> This implies that various forms of congruency--i.e., the perceptions of a social situation held by the individual in it -- may very well determine the amount and forms of communication that occur between persons.

And, in fact, Stark (1959: 182) found in her study of social caseworkers that the very first responses of the caseworker to his client tend to determine the extent of communication.

One example using a coorientational approach is a study by Bowes and Stamm (1975) comparing the opinions of the general public, community leaders, and government agencies concerning a proposed plan of water management and industrial development in a small town in North Dakota. The three groups involved were given questionnaires measuring their own opinions and also identical questionnaires on which they were to predict the opinions of the other two groups. After the scores on the various questionnaires were correlated, the results represented the amount of accuracy and agreement between the groups involved.

The authors expected that the community leaders, as an intermediary group between the public and the government agency, would have the highest level of accuracy with the other groups. However, the results showed that although community leaders thought they knew where the agencies stood, objective measures of accuracy proved otherwise. In general, the authors found that "there exists more agreement among groups in the information system than the groups themselves perceive" (Bowes and Stamm, 1975: 30), and that this discrepancy was greatest for the public's assessment of agency opinion.

Apparently, the community leaders were of little help in improving agency-public accuracy. It seems that the most relevant public relations goal for the government agencies would be to convince the public that they do, in fact, agree as to the purposes and functions of the proposed project.

In Grunig's (1972) study of groups concerned with low-income housing in an affluent suburban community (see above, p. 18), he found that 'liberal' groups played the intermediary role between the poor and the other groups. Coorientational evaluation showed that liberal groups have more direct communication with the poor, and thus higher congruency, accuracy and understanding. However, there was no indication that groups on the other side (i.e., economic interests and suburbanites) were any more knowledgeable about the opinions of the low-income groups as a result of the liberal groups' intermediary activities.

Grunig and Stamm (1973: 2) conclude that "most researchers have paid too little attention to the organization the change agent represents" (see discussion above of McGrath's (1966) conceptualization, p. 17). They also note that "change agents must be capable of diachronic communication rather than simply synchronic communication" (Grunig and Stamm, 1973: 7). This

supports Etzioni's attack on efforts by organizations to coopt client-members into their decision-making process (see above, p. 20).

The value of diachronic communication is emphasized in a coorientational study of communication between state senators and their constituents (Hesse, 1975). Hesse defines synchronic communication as information output and diachronic communication as "listening" activities. He found that diachronic communication showed the greatest relationship to accuracy, congruency and agreement. "Senators who were measured as being highly accurate engaged in high amounts of 'listening' communication activity" (1975: 19). Hesse suggests that "legislators who engage in a great deal of 'synchronic' communication behavior of 'information output' are seeking agreement and congruency, but not accuracy" (1975: 18). A politician who is interested in correctly perceiving his constituents' opinions (accuracy) is presumably a better "representative" of his district. Indeed, Hesse concludes that "successful implementation of 'listening' communication behavior seems to result in senatorial 'success'." (Hesse, 1975: 23).

Terreberry (1968: 612) corroborates Hesse's conclusion: "Communication channels to...information producing and distributing agencies would be expected to increase long-run viability (of an organization in its environment)." Janowitz, Wright and Delany (1962: 278) note that effective public relations programs should result from "analyzing administrative behavior from the point of view of public perspectives--from the external standpoint." However, Gawthrop (1973) speculates that an organization is not likely to engage in diachronic communication if it feels that it can cope with environmental changes.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, a variety of theories and constructs concerning external organizational communication have been incorporated into Grunig's decision-situation theory. The virtues of the coorientational model as a tool for measuring the effects of communication have been outlined in support of diachronic communication patterns for change agents or mediators.

The value of the decision-situation theory for public relations practitioners is two-fold. First, it can help them locate and identify "publics" that are most likely to seek and benefit from public relations activities. This approach eliminates the wasteful procedures of mass coverage in hopes of reaching a few. Using the coorientational model, the public relations practitioner can isolate areas of confusion or misunderstanding between the organization and its publics, thereby enabling him to focus his public relations program on these important issues. The diachronic communication pattern appears promising for facilitating external organizational communication; it actually constitutes an "about-face" from traditional persuasive public relations practices.

The second virtue of the decision-situation theory lies in its ability to incorporate diverse theories of external organizational communication into a single conceptual framework that is easily operationalized. Any empirical support resulting from testing of this model should serve to unite public relations researchers within a single frame of reference. The acceptance of a general paradigm of external organizational communication which, in turn, generates research comprising an integrated, specialized body of knowledge, is the first step toward the professionalization of public relations practitioners.

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